

# COMMUNITY LIBRARY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY NEEDS ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

A variety of methods were used in conducting the needs assessment:

**Survey:** Surveys were distributed to 4,263 participants of focus groups, community meetings, and the schools as a way to bring an element of continuity to the disparate groups. A total of 928 surveys were completed:

October 6, 2001	--	Grapes and Grains festival, distribution of surveys; 56 completed
December, 2001	--	4,000 surveys distributed to parents of K-7 students and students in 10 <sup>th</sup> grade social studies classes; 722 completed.
January 25, 2001	--	55 surveys distributed to senior citizen group; 23 completed
February 26, 2002	--	10 surveys distributed to African-American group; 8 completed
March 5, 2001	--	15 surveys distributed to Womens Economic Ventures; 10 completed
April 8, 2002	--	12 surveys distributed to Block Grant Advisory Committee; 6 completed
April 19, 2002	--	9 surveys distributed to Homeless Coalition; 8 completed
April 25 2002	--	8 surveys distributed to Independent Living Resource Center; 8 completed
May 3, 2002	--	8 surveys distributed to Vocational Training Center; 8 completed
May 8, 2002	--	22 surveys distributed to Senior Nutrition Program; 15 completed
May 9, 2002	--	62 surveys distributed to Center for Employment Training; 58 completed
May 10, 2002	--	6 surveys distributed to West Newlove neighborhood/Safe Haven; 6 completed

**Focus Groups:** A library representative and the Grants Administrator from the City facilitated the sessions. Surveys were distributed as people arrived, and they were asked to complete them before the meeting began. The surveys were collected before the meeting ended. An introduction was given concerning the reasons for the surveys and the meeting. An emphasis was placed on the idea that we were soliciting the opinions of various groups in the City, and that it was very important to hear their recommendations in order to do appropriate planning. Questions were taken from the surveys, but re-worded to elicit comments. Participants in the focus groups included: An African American organization meeting of ten people, the board of the Central Coast Literacy Project, a committee of 9 service providers to the homeless, a 12 person advisory committee for block grant funds, an 8 member physically disabled advocacy group, 8 representatives from the Vocational Training Center (developmentally disabled), and a neighborhood group of Hispanic (Mixteco) residents

January 7, 2002	--	Central Coast Literacy Council, facilitated by Jack Buchanan
February 26, 2002	--	B.R.A.G. (African American) group, facilitated by Marcia Frasier and Celeste Coelho-Hudson
April 8, 2002	--	Block Grant Advisory Committee, facilitated by Jack Buchanan and Celeste Coelho-Hudson
April 19, 2002	--	Homeless Coalition, facilitated by Marcia Frasier and Celeste Coelho-Hudson
April 25, 2002	--	Independent Living Resource Center, facilitated by Marcia Frasier and Celeste Coelho-Hudson

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- May 3, 2002 -- Vocational Training Center, facilitated by Marcia Frasier and Celeste Coelho-Hudson
- May 10, 2002 -- West Newlove Neighborhood

**Contacts with School Leaders:** Meetings were held with the Superintendent of the Santa Maria-Bonita School District, and the Superintendent of the Santa Maria Joint Union High School District, Assistant Superintendents of both districts, the district librarian from the elementary school district, and library supervisor of the high school district:

- August 2, 2001 -- meeting with elementary school district staff including the assistant Superintendent of Instruction, the Business Manager, and the Coordinator for Library/Media Services
- August 27, 2001 -- meeting of the same group as above
- September 10, 2001-- meeting of this group and the Assistant Superintendent of the Santa Maria Joint Union High School District
- September 24, 2001 -- meeting of the same group as above
- February, 2002 -- telephone meeting between Jack Buchanan and the Superintendent (Dave Francis) of the Santa Maria-Bonita School District
- February 19, 2002 -- meeting with the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent of the Santa Maria Joint Union High School District
- March 8, 2002 -- meeting with the Assistant Principal and Library supervisor of Santa Maria High School

**Contacts and Meetings with Community Organizations and Leaders:** Meetings and contacts were made with various organizations representing important segments of our population

- December 19, 2001 --Conversation with coordinator of Workforce Resource Center
- December 21, 2001 --Meeting with Santa Maria Valley Genealogical Society Board
- January 25, 2002 --Senior citizen group, facilitated by Jack Buchanan
- February 7, 2002 --Meeting with Latino activist and Womens Economic Ventures (WEV) principal, Hilda Zacarias
- March 5, 2002 --Library tour given to WEV participants included background on the project and the distribution of surveys
- May 8, 2002 -- Senior Nutrition Program presentation by Marcia Frasier, Silvia Athie, and Celeste Coelho-Hudson
- May 9, 2002 -- Center for Employment Training presentation by Jack Buchanan and Celeste Coelho-Hudson

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The library has received cooperation from both the Santa Maria-Bonita School District and the Santa Maria Joint Union High School District in planning the services of the new library, and in developing a survey. Meetings with the Santa Maria Bonita School District were held at the school district office beginning on August 2, 2001. Attending were Cindy Clark, Business Manager, Phil Alvarado, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction (also a member of the Library Board of Trustees), Bill Stokes, District Librarian, Celeste Coelho-Hudson, Grants Administrator for the City of Santa Maria, Jack Buchanan, City Librarian, and Marcia Frasier, Principal Librarian. Preliminary discussions revolved around the willingness of the school district to assist in pursuing a joint venture project with the City of Santa Maria for the purpose of building a new Main library. Additional meetings were held on August 27, 2001 during which Cathy Allee, SMPL's Children's Services Librarian also attended. Other meetings took place on September 10, 2001, and September 24, 2001, where Roger Hill, Assistant Superintendent of the Santa Maria Joint Union High School District joined the committee.

During the course of these meetings a survey was developed to be completed by the parents of second and sixth grade students in ten of the fourteen elementary schools in the district. Tenth grade sophomore students attending Santa Maria High School would also be surveyed. The purpose of the survey was to determine what impediments if any discouraged families and students from visiting the current library, and to find out what services families and students would like to see offered by the library. While emphasis was placed on children's activities and services, the survey also included questions which could be answered by other interest and age groups.

It was decided that the library and each district would develop a set of questions for the survey, which would then be analyzed by the whole committee. The library agreed to pay for the printing of the surveys and the elementary school district agreed to distribute and score the surveys using their SCANTRON equipment. A total of 4,000 surveys were distributed with 722 returned. Elementary school parents completed 509 surveys, 231 of which were in Spanish, and 213 were completed by 10<sup>th</sup> grade high school students. The results included a good cross section of Spanish speaking and English speaking parents, some of whom were non-users and some of whom were regular library customers. Likewise the high school student responses represented a mix of users and non-users.

A survey of the general public was conducted during the City's annual fall "Grapes and Grains" festival on October 6, 2001. This event is a large fundraiser for area nonprofits, and attracts crowds of people who enjoy the food, crafts, and carnival rides. It is held on the Library and City Hall parking lots and grounds. The Friends of the Library assisted in encouraging attendees to complete surveys, fifty-six of which were returned.

Several informal meetings were held with area agencies and organizations to determine what needs of theirs were not being met, and how they could envision a new library to help meet those needs. Contact was made with Terry Exum of the Workforce Resource Center on December 19, 2001. This non profit agency sponsored by the County of Santa Barbara works with other

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agencies including Allan Hancock Community College to offer a “one stop” source for employment related needs. Discussion revolved around what this agency needed to do its work, that it couldn’t do now, and whether a new library could assist in that effort.

Two board members from the Santa Maria Valley Genealogical Society met with Marcia Frasier on December 21, 2001 to discuss the needs of that organization’s members. This group is one of the most active on the Central Coast. Traditionally, there has been a cooperative relationship between the genealogy society and the public library. During the early 1980’s a certified genealogist was a member of the reference staff who, through contacts and grants, was able to build a sophisticated genealogy collection. The Genealogy Society assisted in that effort. Informal classes of the Society have been held in the library’s genealogy room and attempts have been made to avoid duplicate purchasing between the two entities.

On January 7, 2002, City Librarian Jack Buchanan met with the Board of the Central Coast Literacy Council to discuss that organization’s needs. Most of its training classes are now held on the Allan Hancock Community College campus. Jack Buchanan also led a discussion in a meeting of mostly anglo senior citizens on January 25, 2002 during which 23 of the surveys distributed were completed.

Jack Buchanan, Marcia Frasier, and Celeste Coelho-Hudson met with community activist, Hilda Zacarias on February 7, 2002 to discuss the needs of the Hispanic community, and to receive advice on using the best strategy to contact Latino groups in the city. Ms. Zacarias is also the Program Director for the Women’s Economic Ventures, an educational program which assists women in starting their own businesses.

On February 7, 2002 Marcia Frasier, Reference Librarian, Colleen Beck, and other reference staff were given a tour of the new City Recreation and Parks’ Youth Center, which is intended to serve the teenage residents of Santa Maria. Barbara Wiley, the facility’s director discussed the computer lab which will eventually offer Internet access and which now has computers with word processing software and games. Cooperative programming and the possibility of sharing a youth services librarian position were among the topics discussed.

Contact with the Superintendent of the Santa Maria-Bonita School District was made by Jack Buchanan in February, during which it was apparent that the school district could not enter into a cooperative agreement with the library, because of uncertain funding issues. Library trustee member Margaret Cooper along with Jack Buchanan and Marcia Frasier then met with the Superintendent of the high school district, Jeff Hearn and Assistant Superintendent, Roger Hill on February 19, 2002 to discuss the possibility of creating a joint agreement with the Santa Maria Joint Union High School district.

A focus group of about 10 people was conducted by Marcia Frasier and Celeste Coelho-Hudson on February 26, 2002 during which 8 surveys were completed by members of B.R.A.G. (Blacks Recognizing a Goal). After the surveys were written, a flip chart was used to elicit comments based on the survey questions. Other ideas for service needs were also noted on the chart.

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A class of the Women's Economic Ventures was held at the library on March 5, 2002. Before the tour and class, Colleen Beck gave an overview of the library project and asked participants to complete the surveys so we could consider the viewpoint of their group in addition to others we were surveying.

Marcia Frasier discussed the state of the Santa Maria High School library on March 8, 2002 with the library supervisor, Rebecca Spendlove. Erik Frost, the Assistant Principal who supervises Ms. Spendlove also participated in the conversation. Discussion centered around a description of the school library and the library's needs.

Jack Buchanan and Celeste Coelho-Hudson attended a meeting of the Block Grant Advisory Board on April 8, 2002. An overview of the project was presented and comments were solicited from the group. Part of the matching funds for the project will come from Block Grant funds, so this group's support and advice is very important.

Marcia Frasier and Celeste Coelho-Hudson facilitated a focus group of representatives providing social services to the homeless in Northern Santa Barbara County on April 19, 2002. In addition to the discussion, members of the Homeless Coalition completed eight surveys.

A focus group of individuals representing Santa Maria's physically disabled population was facilitated by Marcia Frasier and Celeste Coelho-Hudson on April 25, 2002. Called the Independent Living Resource Center, this group also completed eight surveys.

On May 3, 2002 Celeste Coelho-Hudson and Marcia Frasier met with the Vocational Training Center administrators and four of their developmentally disabled clients. Eight surveys were completed and a flip chart was used to record discussion points.

The Senior Nutrition Program based at an area church was the site of a community meeting on May 8, 2002 during which twenty-two mostly Spanish speaking elderly people participated in a discussion about their library needs. Marcia Frasier and Celeste Coelho-Hudson spoke to the group with the assistance of Library Assistant, Silvia Athie who translated during the discussion. This group also completed fifteen surveys.

Jack Buchanan and Celeste Coelho-Hudson led a discussion of mostly Hispanic students and staff in the Center for Employment Training on May 9, 2002. Sixty-two people discussed what they wanted to see in a new library, and 58 of them completed surveys.

Celeste Coelho-Hudson facilitated a focus group of Hispanics from the City's West Newlove neighborhood, which is an area designated by the U.S. Department of Justice as a "weed and seed" site. These are neighborhoods targeted for crime prevention and special community activity programs. Some 25% of this neighborhood are Mixtecos; an indigenous culture from Mexico who speak various unwritten dialects and for whom Spanish is a second language. The meeting was held on May 10, 2002 at a building used as a family resource center called Safe Haven.

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A total of 4,263 Santa Marians participated in the Needs Assessment, and over 900 surveys were completed.

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## COMMUNITY ANALYSIS

### **Governmental Agencies**

The City of Santa Maria will serve as the lead agency in the planning of the proposed library project. The City will use a team approach to implement the project from the planning phase through completion of construction. The project team will be headed up by the City Manager and the City Librarian assisted by the Assistant City Manager and the Principal Librarian. The Director of Administrative Services and his staff will oversee accounting and assist in implementation of the technology/telecommunications system. The Director of Community Development and his staff will handle the issuance of planning and building permits, planchecking and inspections, environmental mitigation monitoring and compliance with planning conditions of approval for the project. The City Engineer will have the primary responsibility of handling the project bidding process and construction management.

### **School Agencies**

There are two public school districts that are located within the primary library service area, which is defined as being within the incorporated limits of Santa Maria. The school districts affected are the Santa Maria-Bonita School District that has 14 public schools serving kindergarten through eighth grade (K-8) and the Santa Maria Joint Union High School District that has three public high schools serving ninth through twelfth grades (9-12). A joint use cooperative agreement has been executed with Santa Maria Joint Union High School District that will specifically target Santa Maria High School students who are having difficulty completing their diploma requirements. The proposed new library facility will provide an alternative opportunity outside of the traditional school campus setting for these students to successfully complete the requirements needed to graduate.

### **Community Organizations**

Numerous community organizations will be served by the proposed project. Many groups in the community have expressed the desire to collaborate in providing services as well as use the facility. In particular, there is a need in the community for classroom and meeting space that the new facility will provide. Throughout the program planning phase, the City will work with various local organizations including, but not limited, to: the Central Coast Literacy Council, the Center for Employment Training, the Small Business Development Center, the City of Santa Maria Recreation and Parks Department, the Youth Services Collaborative, the Independent Living Resource Center and Women's Economic Ventures. This will ensure that the program services, equipment and technology provided are suited to the needs of the community.

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## Demography

The information presented in this section is based on statistics for the incorporated area of Santa Maria, which has been identified as being the primary library service area.

### POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Santa Maria has seen tremendous population growth in the last twenty years. The 1990 U.S. Census reported a total population of 61,284 persons residing in the City of Santa Maria. This was a 54 percent increase from the 1980 Census count of 39,685 people. The average annual growth rate for the ten year period between these census counts was 4.44 percent. The U. S. Census estimates the City's 2000 population to be 77,423, which represents a 26 percent increase from the 1990 Census count. The overall population growth from 1980 to 2000 was 95%. The State Department of Finance estimates the City's 2002 population to be 80,511. Based on the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) Regional Growth Forecast 2000-2030, Santa Maria's population growth is projected conservatively at 2% per year for the next twenty years.

### Population by Age Characteristics

According to the 1990 Census, the median age of the City's population was 29.33 years old. In 1980, the median age was 27.90. The 1970 Census recorded a median age of 24.50. These data represented a significant aging of the City's population from 1970 to 1990. However, recent data on the increasing number of school-age children and the 2000 Census suggests that this aging trend is reversing. Santa Maria's population is growing younger. Table 1 shows the percentage of three life cohorts based on the 1980, 1990 and 2000 Census data.

TABLE 1  
Age Ranges Based on the 1980, 1990 and 2000 Census

AGE RANGES	1980 CENSUS	1990 CENSUS	2000 CENSUS
0-17	29.4%	29.9%	31.6%
18-64	59.9%	58.1%	57.1%
65 & OVER	10.7%	12.0%	11.3%

The 2000 median age for Santa Maria is now 29.2 which is significantly lower than the median age of 33.3 for the state and 35.3 for the United States.

### Population by Racial/Ethnic Characteristics

The Hispanic population is the largest ethnic group in Santa Maria. Although "Hispanic" describes an ethnic population, it has been classified as a racial category in this assessment. Table 2 compares the population changes by race, including Hispanic, between 1980 and 2000. In 1980, 33.5 percent of the population claimed Hispanic origins; in 2000, 59.7 percent of the population claimed Hispanic origins. These data show a 248 percent increase in the Hispanic population as compared with a 95 percent increase in the total population of the City.



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TABLE 2  
Population Changes from 1980 to 2000

RACE	1980 CENSUS	2000 CENSUS	% CHANGE
White (Non-Hispanic)	23,073	24,775	7%
Black (Non-Hispanic)	823	1,471	79%
Hispanic (All Races)	13,281	46,222	248%
Native American (Non-Hispanic)	390	1,394	257%
Asian & Pacific Is. (Non-Hispanic)	2,082	3,561	71%
Other (Non-Hispanic)	31	0	-31%
<b>TOTAL POPULATION</b>	<b>39,685</b>	<b>77,423</b>	<b>95%</b>

Table 3 shows that proportionally, between 1980 and 2000, the White (non-Hispanic) population declined as dramatically as the Hispanic population increased, while the proportions of Black and Asian populations remained about the same.

TABLE 3  
Percentage of Population by Race

RACE	1980 CENSUS	2000 CENSUS
White	58.1%	32.0%
Hispanic	33.5%	59.7%
Asian & Pacific Islanders	5.2%	4.8%
Black	2.1%	1.9%
Native American	1.0%	1.8%
Other	0.1%	0.0%

By comparison, the Hispanic population for California was 32.4% and 12.5% for the United States in 2000.

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## INCOME CHARACTERISTICS

### Per Capita Income

Santa Maria's per capita income rose 86 percent between 1980 and 1990, from \$6,507 to \$12,118. However, between 1990 and 2000 it only increased 14 percent from \$12,118 to \$13,780. By comparison, in 2000 the per capita income was \$23,059 for Santa Barbara County, \$22,711 for the State of California and \$21,587 for the United States.

### Household and Family Income

The 2000 Census data show that the median household income in Santa Maria was \$36,541 and the median income for families (excluding single person households) was \$39,277 during the same period.

By comparison, Santa Barbara County's median household income was \$46,677 in 2000 and the County's median family income was \$54,042 during the same time period. The state median household income was \$47,493 and the median family income was \$53,025. The national median household income was \$41,994 and the median family income was \$50,046. This shows that Santa Maria's median household and family incomes are considerably lower than the county, state and national medians.

## EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS

According to the 2000 Census, the City has 33,646 persons 16 years and older in the labor force; there are 21,913 persons 16 years and older that are not in the labor force. The City's unemployment rate was estimated at 5.2% with the state somewhat lower at 4.3% and the United States even lower at 3.7%.

Listed below, as a percentage of total employment, are the major employment industries in Santa Maria according to the 2000 Census.

Retail Trade	12.2%
Prof. & Related Services	7.0%
Agriculture	21.4%
Manufacturing	8.7%
Construction	6.1%
Educational, Health, Social	13.5%
Other	31.1%

Listed below are the occupation categories listed in the 2000 Census. The percentage of total employment is again shown.

Technical, Sales, & Administrative Support	23.4%
Managerial & Professional Specialty Occupations	17.8%
Operators, Fabricators, & Laborers	9%
Farming, Forestry, & Fishing Occupations	18.7%
Service Occupations	16.4%
Precision Production, Craft, & Repair Occupations	14.8%

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## FARMWORKERS

Santa Maria is an agriculturally-based community. Production of labor-intensive crops, such as strawberries, increased dramatically in Santa Barbara County--from 750 acres in 1981 to over 5,000 acres in 1991. Federal immigration policies have also had the effect of increasing the number of farmworkers living in the community. State and/or County housing policies discourage on-site farmworker housing. The farmworker housing problem has thus become the burden of the urban communities adjacent to the fields.

Farmworkers earn lower wages than workers in most other industries. Lower incomes result in greater housing cost burdens and/or increased overcrowding. Often entire families are forced to occupy single bedrooms in a home. Other farmworkers may live in tool sheds and like structures with no sanitation and little protection from the elements.

Farmworker families are traditionally large and need large affordable rental units. Many need rental assistance and support services in the areas of child care, health screening, medical care, literacy, and language skills. Single male farmworkers working on a seasonal basis need permanent decent affordable housing located in proximity to the agricultural areas where they work. A seasonal residential facility that would provide single room occupancy (SRO) housing at an affordable subsidized rental rate is needed to shelter these individuals.

## POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Based on the 2000 U.S. Census, 15.5 percent of Santa Maria families are living in poverty compared to 10.6 percent statewide and 9.2 percent nationwide. Concerning individuals, 19.7 percent are living in poverty in Santa Maria compared to 14.2 percent statewide and 12.4 percent nationwide. Of greatest concern is an increase in the number of individuals and families becoming homeless or at risk of becoming homeless due to poor economic conditions.

Major factors affecting the increase in poverty are unemployment and underemployment. The unemployment rate in Santa Maria increased from 7.2 percent in 1990 to 10.4 percent in 1994. During this time there was a significant loss of jobs in manufacturing and professional employment in the Santa Maria area. This was due, in part, to the loss of federal contracts in the defense and aerospace industries. Also, because of the economic recession at that time, fewer companies were expanding or relocating to the area. Currently, the unemployment rate is estimated at 5.2% for Santa Maria, 4.3% for California and 3.7% percent for the United States.

To combat the growing problem of poverty in the community, there is a need for higher paying jobs and a stable employment base. The City has established goals and policies to encourage economic development, job opportunity activities and occupational training programs. The new library facility is proposed to include a career center that would complement the City's strategy.

In January 1997, the JOBS 2000 Task Force was created to develop an aggressive business attraction, outreach and marketing program for the purpose of attracting high quality jobs to Santa Maria. The task force met nearly twice per month for two years to develop such a program. A collaborative effort, the task force consists of the Mayor, the Mayor Pro-Tem, two Airport Board representatives, the Chamber of Commerce President, the Economic Development Association President and member-at-large Quintron Systems Inc. Vice President and General Manager.

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The primary goal of the program is to identify and attract light manufacturing, research and other clean businesses that will create higher-paying jobs, increase the tax base and generally contribute to the quality of life in Santa Maria. The program focuses on prospective businesses that will provide employment opportunities other than the typical service and retail oriented jobs currently available for the underemployed. The program also is directed at businesses that can guarantee point of sale transactions from Santa Maria to increase the tax base.

Funding for an Outreach Marketing Program was provided jointly by the City of Santa Maria and the Santa Maria Public Airport District. Each agency provided \$44,800 per year for two years to cover the costs of the program. The program was administered by the Economic Development Association as a two year pilot project until Spring 2000. The program has now been extended as the Continued Prosperity Program (CPP).

### ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE INDEX (API)

The Academic Performance Index (API) for the Santa Maria-Bonita School District on an average is 590-600. The State ranking for the district is in the bottom third in the State. However, when ranked against similar schools they are ranked #7 or in the top third. The API for the Santa Maria Joint Union High School District is 562 which is ranked in the bottom third statewide. However, approximately one-third of the student population at Santa Maria High are not English-proficient.

### MEDIAN PROPERTY VALUE

Based on the North Santa Barbara County Economic Outlook for 2001 prepared by the UC Santa Barbara Economic Forecast Project, the median residential property value for Santa Maria was \$167,600. This value is still somewhat affordable compared to the County of Santa Barbara median value of \$356,670.

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## COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

Santa Maria sits at the northern end of the Santa Maria Valley, immediately south of the Santa Barbara-San Luis Obispo County line and the Santa Maria River. Historically, the river flooded the valley floor, depositing rich alluvial soils and making the valley one of the most productive agricultural areas in the state. Between 1869 and 1874, Santa Maria developed in the middle of this agricultural valley when four local men, Rudolph Cook, John Thornburg, Isaac Fesler, and Isaac Miller, each dedicated one square mile of land at the corner of Broadway and Main Streets for the purpose of creating a new town. Originally known as “Central City,” the city’s name was changed to “Santa Maria” on February 18, 1885, because mail was being sent to Central City, Colorado.

On September 12, 1905, the City of Santa Maria, California was incorporated. Around 1926, John Orcutt discovered the Santa Maria oil fields, and the unincorporated town of Orcutt started about six miles south of the Main Street/Broadway intersection, the center of Santa Maria. This area has remained mostly residential and has become a “bedroom” community to Santa Maria. For 49 years the city’s incorporated area remained at four square miles. Since August 1954, annexations have increased it to 20.17 square miles. Since 1957, the population has more than doubled and is now estimated by the State Department of Finance at 80,511.

Since 1957, the local economy has tracked the boom and bust cycle of government spending on programs at Vandenberg Air Force Base, approximately 20 miles southwest of Santa Maria. In the 1970's, the City Council embarked on a redevelopment project to stabilize the local employment picture and increase local government revenues. The Santa Maria Town Center added over 400,000 square feet of shopping area within an enclosed shopping mall environment. Subsequently, the City Council has acted aggressively to preserve Santa Maria's position as a regional retail destination, which is currently paying off. Retail spending has been up sharply in the past few years with Santa Maria capturing 29% of Santa Barbara County’s retail sales in 2001.

Over the past 25 years, Santa Maria actively sought industrial growth and employment to balance lower-paying agricultural and retail sector jobs. However, past economic trends made success in this endeavor difficult. Due to outside forces, many jobs related to defense contracts at Vandenberg Air Force Base were lost. Additionally, the Challenger disaster dealt a serious financial blow to the Santa Maria economy. But, in the past few years, job creation has accelerated and income has increased significantly. Employment gains during the past few years are the result of new industries, such as MicroAge Teleservices, entering the Santa Maria Valley.

However, Santa Maria’s economy is still heavily dependent on agriculture, especially the labor-intensive crops of broccoli, strawberries and grapes. These labor-intensive crops attract seasonal Hispanic farm workers and their families to the Santa Maria Valley. With the migration of Hispanic farmworkers, including Mixteco Indian immigrants from Oaxaca, Mexico, and their extended families come new challenges. Those challenges include language barriers, cultural differences, lack of education, underemployment, poverty and insufficient income to afford decent housing.

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In the late 1980s, industrial companies were attracted to Santa Barbara County because of Santa Maria's affordable housing. The affordable housing in the Santa Maria Valley made 60 to 90 mile commutes to well-paying, defense industry jobs in and around Santa Barbara economically viable. However, due to the 20 to 30 percent statewide decline in real estate market values in the early 1990s, affordable housing became less of a priority for these companies. At that time, Santa Maria was considered an affordable housing "*Mecca*." In 1995, the City completed the annexation of about 1,050 acres of land, the majority of which was designated for residential land uses, creating a steady supply of land for development of housing. Even though it is agreed the real estate market is currently strong and home sales have been soaring the past few years, the median sales price was still relatively affordable at \$167,600 in 2001. There is a concern, however, that when the demand exceeds the supply it will drive sales and rental prices upward to an unacceptable level.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF SERVICE NEEDS

The northern half of Santa Barbara County is growing at a fast rate. According to the 2000 census, the city of Santa Maria grew from 61,284 in 1990 to 77,423 in 2000. This 26.3% jump in population far exceeds that of the county as a whole which increased only 8% during the same period. (As of April, 2002 the official population count for Santa Maria is 80,511). Unlike the southern part of the county which follows a de facto “no growth policy”, the City of Santa Maria prides itself on welcoming businesses and housing to the City. The fact that housing is cheaper than in other parts of the County encourages the growth we have seen in the last decade. The UCSB Economic Forecast report for 2001 entitled, “North Santa Barbara County Economic Outlook 2001” says that while the 2001 median housing price in California was \$264,080, and was \$325,100 in the County of Santa Barbara, the 2001 figure for Santa Maria was just \$167,600. Many of our residents commute to Santa Barbara to work, because they can’t afford to live in that part of the County. Growth in Santa Maria will continue well into the next decade. The Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) projects the population to top 110,000 within the next twenty years. Our local Community Development Department predicts a twenty year build out of 118,000, but they caution that this figure includes only the current City boundaries. There is constant pressure for annexations of unincorporated areas into the City by developers, because we have the lowest building fees in the County of Santa Barbara. An example is a proposed annexation of 4,500 homes being considered now, which would expand the City’s population by 15,000.

Despite city efforts to attract sales tax producing businesses, agriculture is still an important part of the Santa Maria economy. According to the aforementioned UCSB Economic Forecast Project, agriculture represents 16% of the north county’s economy with broccoli, wine grapes, and strawberries comprising the three leading crops grown in our area. This type of labor intensive agriculture attracts migrant laborers from Mexico, many of whom have decided to put down roots in Santa Maria. Added to the large population of Latinos who have been in the Santa Maria Valley for generations, the agricultural workers and their families have helped to swell Santa Maria’s Hispanic population to 46,196 or 59.7% of the total 77,423 residents. That the children of these families are in great need of library services is evidenced by statistics provided by the Santa Maria-Bonita School District. As of November, 2001, 88% of students in the Santa Maria-Bonita school district qualify for the federally subsidized school lunch program. Families receiving AFDC have doubled since 1999-2000 to 1,669 in 2000-2001. However, this figure represents just 14% of the total 11,122 children in the district, showing that while the families are poor, they are among the “working poor”. Eighty-two percent of the district’s students are Hispanic, and the district has the largest migrant population (2,260 students) region between Los Angeles and San Francisco. In fact, the district became its own region three years ago based upon that large number. Some 6,140 or 53% of the children are identified as “limited English proficient”. Finally, 78.86% of the enrolled children in the district are considered below the poverty level.

The high school district tells a similar story. One of the two high schools and the continuation school belonging to the district are located in a largely white, middle class suburb of Santa

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Maria. The other high school, Santa Maria High School is located in the center of the city about three blocks away from the library. While 57% of the total district's 6,226 students are Hispanic, 78% of students attending Santa Maria High School are Hispanic. Thirty-five percent of Santa Maria High School students qualify for the free or reduced federal lunch program, and 41% have been identified as "limited English proficient" as of Spring 2002. Thirty percent of this high school's students are in the migrant program. It appears that the need for public library services will increase for high school students in the coming years as the poorer and less English proficient children from the elementary school district enter secondary school.

An issue of *California Counts* from the Public Policy Institute of California (Volume 3 number 2, November, 2001) highlighted the topic, "At Home and in School: Racial and Ethnic Gaps in Educational Preparedness." Authored by Jennifer Y. Cheng, the report asserts that one of the predictors of school readiness is preschool education. She quotes from a 1990 *Current Population Survey* in which it is stated that while only about 3% of white children ages 3-5 have not had a family member read to them within the prior week, the figure is 30% for Hispanic children. Cheng says that while there were other disparities in child development activities between white and Hispanic families, "the Hispanic-white gaps were largest in the reading readiness activities." Those parents in Santa Maria who are unable to prepare their children for school at home, look to the public library to help them. Another indicator of educational success according to the report was the "availability and use" of computers at home. A previous Public Policy Institute report cited by Cheng showed that in 1997, 76% of Hispanic children did not have a computer at home, and of those that did only one-third used it. It is clear from Santa Maria's demographics that many Hispanic families cannot afford to purchase computers let alone subscribe to an Internet provider for their children. Nor can they provide the kind of enrichment activities such as story times and homework assistance that public libraries typically offer. Our needs assessment showed that among Spanish speaking parents there was a need for ESL classes, literacy classes, parenting classes, story times, and especially homework, computer, and career centers to help their children succeed in life. The Cheng report would seem to concur that these services are crucial in order for children to succeed in school and beyond.

The compelling result of our needs assessment was that all of the surveyed participants and focus group members whether Spanish speaking or not wanted a library that would offer a variety of classes (including ones on library literacy), a large number of computers to use for Internet access, a homework center with tutors and electronic resources, and a career center to help both students and adults find a good job. A large segment of our public also wants the library to continue expanding recreational and research oriented materials in both Spanish and English. Service to teenagers was identified as an un-met need, but continuation of our services to children was also deemed important. The majority of those surveyed want these services offered in a handicapped accessible facility. The Plan of Service will address these needs.



# COMMUNITY LIBRARY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

## ANALYSIS OF SERVICE NEEDS

There is only one library in the city of Santa Maria, and it lacks sufficient **space** to support the needs of our diverse community. Data retrieved from the surveys, focus groups, and discussions with community agencies all point to the need for increased space in a new library. The needs assessment participants suggested that the library use some of this increased space to offer **classes** for the community.

Officials from the Santa Maria Joint Union High School district have indicated that they would welcome classroom availability in the new library to conduct their classes for students who must make up failed courses in order to graduate and for older students to obtain their high school diplomas after having dropped out earlier. These classes for groups of 10 to 15 people are now held at the district's continuation school which is located south of town, and which is already overcrowded with students from the continuation program. The library is only three blocks away from the high school, providing a centralized location for students to attend class. The district predicts that the number of students needing to take math and English classes in this program will increase as a result of the new state requirement that students pass the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) before being allowed to graduate. Beginning with the class of 2004, all students must pass this test in order to graduate, and they must score at least 60% on the English section and 55% on the math portion of the test. The results of the first exam given on a volunteer basis in 2001, showed that 49% passed the English portion of the exam but that only 36% passed the math section. According to the California Department of Education only 24.32% of the high school district's students took the SAT in 2001. Perhaps the library can play a role in helping more students graduate from high school, which may in turn increase the number of those aspiring to college.

The need for ESL and literacy tutoring is acute in our area. English literacy classes was the fourth highest rated service requested by Spanish speaking parents of elementary students. The Central Coast Literacy Project participated in a discussion in which they expressed a need for classroom space to train their tutors as well as more private space for tutors to teach their students. The library now lacks study rooms or private areas for group study. The Literacy Project currently uses space in Allan Hancock Community College, but increasing college program requirements are threatening to reduce the amount of space needed by the Literacy Project to conduct their training.

Another community agency of importance to Santa Maria is The Santa Maria Valley Genealogy Society. A meeting with some of their staff yielded a need for space in which to hold their meetings and seminars. The group also indicated that they might want to donate their library's collection to our library, because we are open more hours to the public than they are able to staff their facility. Insufficient space prevents us from accepting that gift now.

The Workforce Resource Center is a multi agency program which offers resources to help adults find, obtain, and keep jobs. While they conduct numerous classes at their location in a former department store about a mile south of the library, they indicate a need to find space where

## COMMUNITY LIBRARY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

training and classes can be held outside of their open hours of 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. Mondays through Fridays.

The Women's Economic Ventures, a non-profit group dedicated to assisting women with entrepreneurial pursuits, is also looking for space to offer their courses. The library already participates in this effort by giving talks and library tours to students taking the marketing class. Staff shows the students how to use the catalog, how to find marketing information on specialized electronic databases, and how to find small business assistance and business plans on the Internet. With thirty plus students per tour in our cramped reference department, however, the reference staff now finds it very difficult to conduct these tours in a way that benefits the students while insuring that regular patrons are able to use the library undisturbed. Surveyed participants in the WEV class said that they would use the library more if classes, especially those on library usage, were available at the library.

Forty-two percent of the parents of K-6 graders said that they would visit the library more often if there were classes taught in the library. Spanish speaking parents agreed at the rate of 48%. Even 32% of the tenth grade students at Santa Maria High School thought they would visit the library more if there were classes available. Surveys returned by the general public at the City's annual "Grapes and Grains" fall festival indicated that 56% would like to see classes offered at the library, and ten of the other groups surveyed said they would visit the library more if classes were offered.

Classes on library usage followed by basic computer instruction and Internet searching were the classes most commonly requested by all groups surveyed. Citizenship and English language classes were among those topics for classes requested specifically by Spanish speaking parents, and by other Spanish speaking participants. Both the parents and the African-American focus group participants indicated a need for tutoring children at the library as well as offering classes to parents, which would help them assist their children with homework. A study completed by the Children & Families Commission of Santa Barbara County in 2001 surveyed 173 parents, 17% of whom were from Santa Maria for the purpose of determining how a community could improve the lives of their children. Some of the data from this study mirrors what we found in our own needs assessment. "Parent Education" was listed by parents as a major component in assisting them to raise their children. Parents also said that what they wanted most for their children was "educational success". "Afterschool Programs" were cited by Santa Maria parents as being highly desired for their children. Strongly related to this need was parents' wish to give their children "Access to the Library".

Another often expressed need was space for a **homework center**, **computer center** and a **career center**. The 10<sup>th</sup> grade high school students surveyed indicated that these were the top three services the library should offer. Spanish speaking parents of elementary school aged children rated a homework center followed by a career center as the two most needed services. A computer center was the third most requested service. English speaking parents also rated a homework center as the most important service with a computer center slightly more important than a career center. The district average for the verbal section of the SAT taken in 1999 was 473 out of a possible 800 points, and the average for math was 486 points out of 800 possible points. These "centers" might help students better prepare for tests such as the SAT, as well as

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motivate more of them to go on to college. Non school participants such as the African-American group and the Women's Economic Ventures also thought a computer center was very important. The Homeless Coalition thought a homework center and a career center were the most important services.

Among Anglo senior citizens, **leisure materials** and **research materials** were rated as the most important library service. This group was also very interested in an expanded **genealogy collection**, a literacy tutoring space, and a place to **exhibit art**. On the other hand, the Senior Nutrition Center, composed of mostly male and female Hispanics thought the most important library service was a **children's story hour**. The African-American group also mentioned the need for art exhibit space as being an important service. Leisure and research materials were again rated as the most important library services by those who completed surveys at the Grapes and Grains festival, and by those from the disabled community. Thirty-three percent of tenth graders said they would visit the library more if "materials were better suited to [their] needs". This group thought that **materials in Spanish** were "very important" (31%) or "important" (27%). Thirty-two percent of English speaking elementary age parents thought materials in Spanish were "very important", while 74% of Spanish speaking elementary age parents thought Spanish materials were "very important". Eight of the other eleven groups surveyed who were not in the K-12 survey thought it was "very important" or "important" that library materials be available in Spanish.

Forty percent of people who answered the survey at the Grapes and Grains festival thought that having a **handicapped accessible** library building was "very important". The African-American focus group considered handicapped accessibility "very important", but the Senior Citizen group was more lukewarm (32%) to the idea. Forty-four percent of the high school students surveyed thought it was "very important" to have the building handicapped accessible. Sixty-two percent of Spanish speaking parents thought accessibility was "very important" as did 44% of English speaking parents.

The focus group of developmentally disabled people and one for physically disabled participants thought that the library should go beyond ADA standards for a new library, since these represent only minimal standards. They wanted an "attendant" style bathroom in addition to the usual handicapped stall within the standard bathrooms. Participants in the West Newlove neighborhood focus group also cited the need for these types of bathrooms. The disabled group focus groups were also very vocal about needing specialized computer equipment with assistive devices to use in the library.

After meeting with staff at the Youth Center, it was clear that although the goal of the computer lab was to help teenagers with homework, the primary use by teenagers was, and most likely would be, for entertainment. The lack of professional assistance, coupled with insufficient supervision makes this type of use inevitable. However, both library and Youth Center staff agreed that there were good opportunities for the library and the youth facility to form cooperative programs, perhaps even by sharing a young adult librarian position. The hours the Youth Center is open are somewhat limited by the season, so a new library would help fill the gaps in hours when services would otherwise be unavailable to teenagers. A library homework center would also be open to students of all ages and the career and computer center would be open to adults as well as students. When asked which age group should be most targeted by

## COMMUNITY LIBRARY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

programming, the African-American Group, the Grapes and Grains group, the Block Grant Advisory Committee, the two disabled groups, the women's small business group (WEV), and Senior Nutrition Group all rated **programs for teens** the highest.

Attached to this section is a summary chart of responses to the K-12 survey which was compiled by the Santa Maria Bonita School District. Also included are the comments to questions 10 and 11, which have been translated from Spanish when necessary. A table for non K-12 group surveys is included along with a chart showing the highest responses for each question on the survey, and a list of comments to questions 10 and 11.

# COMMUNITY LIBRARY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

## SERVICE LIMITATIONS OF EXISTING LIBRARY FACILITY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The existing building is deficient in all the areas noted in this section. The chief deficiency is space. More than 5,500 books and videos can be accessed only by asking staff at the reference desk to retrieve the items from the non public storage area. Despite on going weeding, there is no longer any space in the Reference Department to shelve these materials. Some materials in Spanish as well as state and local documents must also be stored away from public view. The “popular library” area on the first floor contains new books added to the collection, entertainment videos in English, books on tape, plus the Spanish language book, video, magazine, and cassette tape collections. While there is clearly a need for more materials in Spanish, there is no room to shelve them. The Children’s room suffers from the same lack of space for juvenile Spanish materials.

The library receives frequent complaints from patrons that there is insufficient seating for reading and study. Electronic resources have slowly but inexorably gobbled up space previously used for study tables. Space for electronic workstations is at a premium as well. And where there was once ample space to display specialized collections such as those for car repair, jobs and careers, these and other special collections are now shelved tightly next to one another. The reason the special collections appear unattractive and uninviting is that we have had to install 82” shelving units to make room for the general collection.

Staff offices and workspaces are similarly impacted by cramped conditions. Book trucks line the aisle of the workroom, because there is no space to shelve items. The area in front of the City Librarian’s office has become a “holding” area for newly arrived books, furniture, and miscellaneous deliveries.

There is limited visual supervision in the Reference Department as more 82” shelving have replaced lower shelving units, blocking the view across the floor. Since there is no staff available to patrol the downstairs portion of the library where the fiction/magazine and “popular library” departments are located, there is no visual supervision at all. A new library would move these departments to the same floor as the reference services.

While more space for technology workstations is needed, there is little possibility of adding workstations anyway since there is no more space in the existing conduits for category 5 wiring. New conduits would require punching through concrete walls. Raceways that twist and turn around walls have been installed by some contractors in an effort to avoid channeling through the concrete. This method looks unsightly and risks degradation of the signal. We were told that wireless technology would also be problematic because of the angles of the concrete walls.

The library has one meeting room which is reserved for library and City functions. This policy became necessary as Children’s division programming increased to meet community demands. The Children’s room has no space to do programs, so the community room is booked to present them. We also have a conference room which is used for library and City interviews, Board of

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Trustee meetings, volunteer work with book mending, and overflow from other library processing functions. Scheduling this room for library meetings is a challenge.

The genealogy room is a special purpose area which shares space with reading tables and government documents. Students use this area for group study since there are so few tables elsewhere in the library. Genealogy patrons, therefore, have little ability to use the mostly reference materials in a quiet atmosphere. Young adults have no space to call their own, as they must traverse the Children's room to find their books. It is therefore difficult to encourage teenagers to read books written for their age group.

The library needs a much larger area for Spanish materials, but has insufficient space to shelve them. A formal computer center is needed beyond the nine Internet stations, three word processors, three CD-ROM stations, available in the reference department, and the single CD-ROM station, and three Internet stations housed in the Children's room. Dedicated machines for email, chat, and games need to be provided apart from those used primarily for research. There is no ability to separate those functions now, since all the available computers are now located in the reference department. The lack of a computer center also provides little opportunity to teach the public computer and Internet skills. Literacy classes cannot be taught in the library since the library's only community room is always booked. There is a need for private tutoring areas for literacy students and volunteers, but the existing building cannot provide the space. A greatly expanded jobs and careers area has been identified as a need, but is not possible now. Help with resume writing, job hunting, and interviewing could be offered to both students and adults by the Workforce Resource Center if we had space to use for this purpose. Likewise, a homework center with volunteer tutors, curriculum related materials, and specialized computer databases is needed by our City's students, but cannot now be provided to them. The Genealogical Society needs a space to house their very useful collection, but our current library building cannot accommodate it.

Space is needed for expanded and new library services, both for students and the general public. Space is also needed for community agencies, which help to provide some of these services, to operate after regular work hours. The existing library building cannot meet either need.

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## SERVICE LIMITATIONS OF THE EXISTING LIBRARY FACILITY

The existing library is divided between two floors. On the first floor are the administration offices, staff room, work room, and conference room; all of which are inaccessible to the public. Space is lacking in these staff areas as illustrated below:

Carts, furniture, and miscellaneous items clutter the reception area in front of the City Librarian's office. This space was further reduced when an office was created for the Assistant Director two years ago. Before that time, the Assistant Director shared an office upstairs, which opens on to the Reference floor, and which she shared with the Adult Reference Librarian, a Library Technician, and several volunteers. While the new office is a definite improvement over the old one, it is cramped and has no outside ventilation.



The Extension Services Office is the administration unit for the three branches operated by the City library by contract with the County. This office is where all branch materials are delivered and processed. Delivery bags with items going to and coming from the branches sit in front of packed bookcases. Processing materials, administration files and computers use most of the remaining space, with one corner of the office serving as the repair and processing stations for main library videos.

The conference room is used for library interviews, and is also an overflow space for the City to conduct interviews. Internal library meetings are conducted



here, and the volunteers who mend our books use this room for their work.

The room is very heavily scheduled, making impromptu meetings nearly impossible.





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The workroom itself is often crowded with book carts filled with overflow items which cannot fit on the processing shelves. An alcove within the workroom is where all the CD's and videos are checked in and inspected before they go back out to the public shelves. Only one or two pages at a time can fit in this area, because of the amount of space required for the computers, CD cleaning machine, and carts. Materials are consequently backed up as staff cannot keep up with the workload. The overdue and registration desk is also located within the workroom area. Ten PC workstations are crammed into this area, where various staff compete for use of the desks and PC's to do their work. Furniture in the workroom has been arranged many times to

accommodate the changing workflow and the increased use of computers. We are still adapting this space, but there is less and less room for innovation.



The public area is even more impacted by insufficient space. The first floor space for public use includes the Friends of the Library shop area, the circulation desk, the Children's room and staff office, the "Popular Library", the literacy collection, fiction, magazines, the Spanish language collection, the CD, video, and book on tape collections, and the staff artist's office. (see attached floorplan of existing library)

The far end of the Children's room is where the Young Adult collection is located. Teenagers are loath to enter the "little kids' room" in order to find their materials. Many in this age group use the adult reference collection to do their homework, but do not often find the books written for their specific interests to read for pleasure. Children's books and videos in the Spanish language are shelved in this room with little opportunity for expansion. The room was recently wired to allow Internet access, but there is room for only three Internet stations and one dedicated library catalog. Children's programming must be done in what once was the "Community Room" located off the foyer at the back entrance to the library. This room is booked constantly for library and City programming, leaving the "community" without a space to hold their meetings and events.





## COMMUNITY LIBRARY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Popular Library expands out north of the Circulation Desk. It was intended to serve as a marketing tool to highlight recent books. The shelves allow books to be filed face out and the signage resembles that seen in bookstores in which simple subject designations guide users. Over the years, other popular items such as videos and books on tape have joined books as high interest browsing collections. What were once spacious aisles between book displays are now packed with display shelving for these other materials. Book carts filled with new books often appear next to the shelving as there is no space to shelve them.



Another large section of this space is devoted to Spanish language books, magazines, videos, and English language books on tape. Because of the high percentage of Spanish speaking patrons in our community, the videos, magazines, and books in Spanish are enormously popular. Our community wants us to purchase more materials in Spanish, but our ability to shelve them is severely restricted by lack of space. Likewise our books on tape are very

popular in a community where many users commute to and from Santa Maria to Santa Barbara (sixty miles to the south) and San Luis Obispo (thirty-five miles to the north). The more of these materials we purchase, the more cramped the Popular Library is for browsing. This situation is frustrating for the very people we wanted to attract through our merchandising efforts.



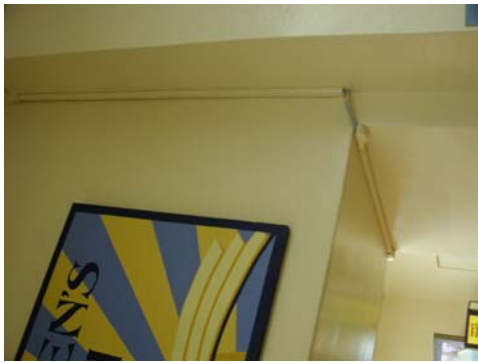
The fiction area, magazine area, and a special collection area for cookbooks is located to the north of the Popular Library. This area is the designated “quiet” section of the library. Numerous complaints from patrons about our not having a space for quiet study prompted us to assign this space as a quiet zone. Unfortunately, it also has the most space for reading tables. Eight tables with four chairs each naturally attract students who want to study together, which creates noise, and precipitates more complaints from the magazine/newspapers readers. Study rooms are a needed service which cannot be met in the existing library. There is no visual supervision of this area at all, as the circulation area is too far away, and the reference staff works upstairs.

The room above the “quiet” fiction area houses the main nonfiction area, the genealogy and documents room, the reference staff workroom, and the reference collection. The entire floor is only 5,000 sq. ft. Study space is almost non-existent in the Reference Department with only twenty-three reader seats available. Study tables have disappeared as we sought to meet the

## COMMUNITY LIBRARY NEEDS ASSESSMENT



extend from the ceiling to the floor in order to run the cable from the ceiling to the computers. Some raceways were installed up and around walls to avoid cutting through the concrete, no doubt adding to problems with data transmission. The recent migration



to a graphical based library automation system has maxed out our ability to offer any more catalogs let alone other technology stations to the public. While we received a grant from the Gates Foundation for six Internet accessible machines, we could not apply for a computer lab from the Foundation,



because we did not have the space and wiring to support it. Students comprise the largest number of Internet users, yet we cannot even begin to satisfy the need for Internet access. In addition to the aforementioned problem with wiring the computers, the space where the routers and

demand for electronic resources. Now we have created a demand for Internet, word-processing, and electronic databases that our nine Internet stations, three dedicated word-processing, and six database stations cannot meet. Even if we did have space to add more technology workstations, however, we do not have conduit space to pull computer cable. The concrete walls around which the new wings of the library were added make installing conduit very difficult. Ugly power poles

extend from the ceiling to the floor in order to run the cable from the ceiling to the computers. Some raceways were installed up and around walls to avoid cutting through the concrete, no doubt adding to problems with data transmission. The recent migration to a graphical based library automation system has maxed out our ability to offer any more catalogs let alone other technology stations to the



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The merchandizing concept of the library has been carried into the Reference Department, where several special collections in areas such as jobs and careers, travel, automobile repair, and computer books were separated out from the main collection, and highlighted with signs and attractive displays. These special collections still exist, but now meld together as we have been forced to install 82" high shelving units to make room for the general collection. Aside from the loss of easy patron access and aesthetic appeal, this area presents severe visual supervision concerns. The installation of security mirrors have not solved the problem.



The genealogy room, is a very inadequate special purpose space, which was originally designed to have two tables with four chairs each for researchers using the genealogy books. There are now four tables, which has now made the genealogy room the sole study area upstairs. The library collects county, city, and EIR documents for the Santa Maria Valley in addition to being a partial depository for state documents. These are also housed in this 522 sq. ft. room. A local collection of documents relating to the Casmalia toxic waste site was set up by the EPA, and also used this room until space considerations forced us to move it to the storage area. Genealogy patrons are unhappy to have to share “their” room with students trying to work on projects together, citizens studying new development proposals for their neighborhoods, Council people reviewing past meeting minutes, and literacy tutors trying to teach their students. The library was forced to turn down a potentially valuable collection of genealogy materials offered to us from the local genealogy society, because we have no shelving space for them.



The reference staff office is adjacent to the genealogy room and the general reference area. The librarian in charge of reference shares this 270 sq. ft. office with two library technicians, volunteers, and a part time clerk. They all share the same computer, and cannot all work in the office at the same time, since there are only three desks. Both rooms were carved out of the reference area so the door to the reference office usually remains open for ventilation. This encourages patrons to walk in as staff are trying to work on off desk assignments. There are times when staff must cope with difficult patrons in a confined space with no escape route.



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The second floor breezeway connects the Reference Department to the original building where the storage area is located. More than 5,500 non fiction, Spanish language, and some reference books are stored in this room, because space has run out in their respective public shelving

areas. Many government documents are also shelved here. Thus patrons do not have easy access to the entire collection.



The library has no private area for literacy tutoring, or for holding literacy classes. Literacy tutors now use our genealogy area for their tutoring on an informal basis, but there are times when other complain about the “noise”. Staff then has to quietly ask the tutor and student to relocate downstairs. This situation is difficult and awkward. A meeting with the Central Coast Literacy Project group targeted a need for library space to use for training tutors, and teaching students. The evening and weekend hours in which the library is open lends itself to offering this service to students and tutors who work during the day.

We have a special collection of job, career, scholarship, and college related material totally over one thousand items, but contacts with the Women’s Economic Ventures (WEV) group, teachers, and the Workforce Resource Center tell us that we need much more to assist Santa Maria residents. The latter group is sponsored by Allan Hancock Community College and the County of Santa Barbara to provide job and training information to adults. A partnership with this group would allow us to offer our facility for after hours classes and more materials if we had space for a jobs and careers center.

Our surveys and focus groups show that there is a clear need for expanded electronic resources, for more materials in Spanish, for a larger genealogy collection, for study areas, for a literacy program, for a homework center, a career center, and classroom space. While we have done a good job at providing most of these services on a minimal level, our community wants to see their library enhance these services in order to truly meet their needs.

**The Santa Maria High School Library**—The facility is situated in the former student cafeteria. Recent grants have allowed the supervisor of the library to engage in updating the dated collection of 22,790 books. Staffing consists of a non credentialed “librarian” working 37.5 hours per week, and a part time assistant clerk to serve a student body of 3,200. The hours of the library, 7:30-8:00 Mondays through Thursdays and 7:30-6:00 Fridays, are difficult to cover for such a limited staff. The library’s supervisor has worked for over nine years, and has done much to bring good service to her clientele. However, she laments her lack of educational background which would have helped support her efforts to manage the collection and some twenty computers. Fifteen of the computers are Internet enabled, and these are linked to the Santa

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Barbara Office of Education's system. Because the facility was built as a cafeteria, the wiring is inadequate for properly configuring electronic resources. Computer monitors face each other so students can easily break out of the security software. Written contracts signed by students for computer privileges have somewhat alleviated this situation, but problems with the computers persist.

Textbooks are located in a basement with no elevator or conveyer system to transport them up to the library other than walking up and down stairs carrying armloads of books. The library does not have space for future growth, and the library is particularly crowded during lunch time when students, having no eating facilities, hang out in the library. The library offers a "homework club" for assisting students from 2:30-8:00, which is staffed by a teacher, counselor, or teacher's aide. There is a career center adjacent to the library where the Internet computers are located.

The lack of sufficient staff, trained and educated to assist students with information, helps explain why our library's reference department is inundated with high school aged students in the afternoons. A recent two week survey conducted at our reference desk showed that an average of eighteen high school aged students per afternoon were researching homework assignments in our reference department. Since the combined total of workstation seating and study seating is only 42 spaces, this group alone takes up 43% of the total seating in the department on any given afternoon. It is clear that the public library relieves some of the pressure on the high school library for student service.

The library supervisor expressed some apprehension that plans to convert part of a room housing the reference collection to word processors, will further erode her ability to find space for the book collection. A comment made by the school superintendent concerning plans for a new campus in the northeast section of town indicates that only a computer based library will be available in the new facility. If this plan is realized, we foresee that the new facility will not reduce the need for students to use the public library to supplement the service provided by their school library.

**Libraries in the Santa Maria Bonita School District**—According to a conversation with the district librarian, all fourteen elementary schools have some sort of library. The average collection size is 11,000 volumes, although many are old and should be discarded. Because there is insufficient funds to replace the old titles, however, severe weeding is discouraged. Half of the school libraries are staffed by 3 to 3 ½ per day Library Assistants. The other half are staffed by 2 to 3 hour per day Library Assistants. Seven hour per day Library Clerks staff the two junior high school libraries. The hours of the libraries are 8:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. None are open either before or after school. The district librarian is the only credentialed librarian on the staff. He is encouraging the Library Assistants and Clerks to take the distance learning courses offered in the Library Technician program at Cuesta Community College in San Luis Obispo County. He hopes these courses will help the staff become more knowledgeable about library processes and procedures.

# COMMUNITY LIBRARY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

## PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS OF THE EXISTING LIBRARY FACILITY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

According to an engineering report written in 1999, no obvious seismic problems were found with the **structure** of the building. However, interior concrete walls resulting from previous additions to the building have made wiring the building for electronic access difficult and expensive. The three remodeling projects have created inefficient spaces which are not easily monitored by staff and which lead to safety concerns. Roof leaks become a chronic condition during the winter months and threaten to soak parts of the collection. The source for heating and ventilation for the library is a boiler, which is considered by the engineering report to be at the end of its useful life. The electrical switchboard has limited space for future electrical upgrades, which further reduces our ability to expand electronic resources and install other electrical devices.

The building **conserves energy** by having no air conditioning. However, heat builds up dramatically in the summer, especially in the computer equipment closet. The doors to the closet, which would normally be locked, must therefore remain open with a fan turned on continuously to circulate the air. Energy is also wasted in the Reference Department as the thermostat senses drafts coming from the staircase where stairwell windows cannot be fully closed.

Some **health and safety issues** also revolve around the ventilation system. During the winter months, the Reference Department is often freezing cold so that staff must wear coats while on the reference desk. Meanwhile, the temperature can be blazing hot downstairs, leading staff to open the doors to get air. The upstairs windows have been partially covered by plexi-glass panels to prevent theft, but this has substantially reduced the circulation of fresh air into the Reference Department, which is especially difficult during the summer. The genealogy room and reference staff office was created from space in the Reference Department, and the ventilation in these rooms is poor. Viruses lurking in this stagnant air find a good environment for infecting staff and the public. Another area of concern is the isolated parts of the library which cannot be observed by staff. Theft by patrons leaving from unsupervised exits are common. The few audible alarms which exist in the building do not solve the problem. Other patrons sometimes annoy others, but are not noticed by staff until another patron complains. We have had several instances of indecent exposure around children and have had at least one case of molestation occur in an unsupervised area.

There is one elevator to assist with **disabled access**, however it is old and tired. People are often caught in the elevator between floors, and need the Fire Department to get them out. Disabled patrons who reach the second floor cannot go back down until the elevator is repaired, or until the Fire Department arrives. The overcrowding of the stacks and computer workstations create difficulties for wheelchair bound patrons. When book carts holding over flow materials are lined up along shelves, the aisles become much narrower than usual. A 1999 architectural report finds that the number of toilets does not meet building code and ADA standards. The report also states that the building in general does not meet current code and ADA requirements for accessibility.

## COMMUNITY LIBRARY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The **acoustics** of the building were not designed for today's library services. Space constraints cause "noisy" activities such as group studying and browsing through videos to be located near "quiet" activities such as doing genealogical research, and reading newspapers. Consequently, we often see antagonisms between patrons who want quiet and those who don't. The acoustical tile, carpeting, and furniture in the library does help control noise to a degree, but complaints concerning noise are still often received. Patrons using the McClelland Street entrance can be heard throughout the first floor of the building as their steps and voices echo down the tiled walkway.

There is almost no **space flexibility and/or expandability** left in the building. The non public storage area on the second floor now houses over 5,500 items which can no longer be shelved in the regular Spanish, video, documents and non fiction collections. The important and well used genealogy collection has outgrown its designated space. Special collections used to guide patrons easily to frequently used subject areas which were broken out from the main collection. We are now unable to either expand or highlight these collections, because we have had to install 82" shelving units rather than maintain the counter high units which once gave the area a spacious look. The workroom has been re-arranged several times, but now there is little room to adapt the space needed to process the ever growing collection of multi media materials

**Spatial relationships** are not always functional in the existing building. The young adult collection shares space with the juvenile collection, effectively limiting usage by teenagers. Part of the book collection used by reference staff is on the first floor as are some of the OPACs. Patrons cannot get assistance with the use of the OPACs or materials unless they go the second floor. Internet terminals are crowded, but we cannot separate those who want to use them only for email from those who need a longer time to search for homework related information, or for other information. Two entrances to the library make circulation functions inefficient, because patrons enter from opposite directions.

The **site** is the only really good quality about the existing building. The library is located next to City Hall, along the major thoroughfare through town (Broadway), across the street from the main shopping mall, in front of which is the hub for bus service, and within walking distance of the high school, two elementary schools, and a residential neighborhood. The Police, Fire, and Parks and Recreation headquarters are also nearby. Construction of the new library is planned to be close to the existing building, allowing the library to remain an integral part of the Civic Center.



# COMMUNITY LIBRARY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

## PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS OF THE EXISTING LIBRARY FACILITY

The current 28,250 sq. ft. building has had three additions built since construction of the original 3,000 square foot structure in 1941. A mezzanine and storage area was constructed in 1958, bringing the total square footage to 7,800. The children's room was added in 1963, increasing the square footage to 10,287. Finally, in 1970 a two story wing was built to house the fiction collection and a community room on the first floor, and the Reference Department on the second floor. Each addition used different architectural styles and incorporated different massing and scale from previous constructions. As a feasibility study conducted by the architectural firm, NBBJ in February of 1999 points out, these additions were simply "tacked" on to the existing building resulting in the original exterior concrete walls and pillars being incorporated into the interior of the building. These concrete walls make any expansion of electrical and data lines extremely difficult and expensive. Conduits must be drilled through 10 inches of concrete. Last year it took three hours just to drill through the concrete in order to run a new telephone line into our community room. Major patching of the walls must also be done whenever the concrete is drilled. Two conduits for computer cable actually run outside the building along the roof line of the breezeway connecting the two wings. These conduits, notwithstanding their obvious exposure to the elements, were apparently built in an effort to minimize the need to drill through concrete.

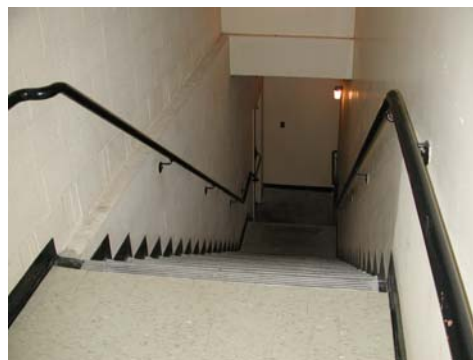


There are also safety concerns attendant with the various remodels. Odd spaces were created during reconstruction, which make surveillance by staff nearly impossible. Because of the need to have public desks placed in centralized locations, significant portions of the building are not within the field of vision of any staff member. There are few alarms in the building to alert staff should someone walk out one of the several emergency exit doors in the building. One exit is on the ground floor, just to the left of the elevator control



## COMMUNITY LIBRARY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

room. When opened, an alarm on this door is activated, but by the time a staff member can run to the door, the person has disappeared. A stairway runs down to the outside of the building from the breezeway connecting the reference wing to the storage area. We have had many items stolen by thieves who use the staircase to make their get-away. The alarm on the door leading from the Reference Department to the breezeway is not activated, because staff must use this route to retrieve books and magazines from storage. There is often only one staff member in the Reference Department during evenings and Saturdays so an alarm at the reference desk was “jury-rigged” allowing staff to alert others downstairs in an emergency.



Although an analysis of the building done by DASSE Design Inc. and Flack + Kurtz Consulting Engineers as part of the NBBJ report shows that the building appears to have no obvious seismic problems, there are other problem areas in the building. The roof leaks in various spots during rain storms. The staff must throw tarps over bookcases in the storage room, in the genealogy room, and wherever else staff notice the leaks, since new leaks appear faster than our public works department can repair them. Wastepaper baskets are positioned randomly (and often precariously) in the public area to catch the rain. There are no fire sprinklers in the building, presenting a hazard in the event of a fire.

The Flack + Kurtz report indicates that while the library’s boiler, which provides heat and ventilation, appears to be in good condition, it is likely that it does not meet current emissions standards. The report also asserts that the boiler is nearing the end of its useful life. Meanwhile, the lack of air conditioning in the building causes the computer telecommunications equipment (now located in a storage room service closet) to run hot during the summer. The doors to this closet must remain open to admit some air into the room, and a chair holding a fan helps to circulate the air. Since there is no air conditioning in the building, there is no wasted energy from that source. However, an interior office for staff was carved out of the existing space in the upstairs reference department without much regard for ventilation. As a result, the thermostat in the main reference area signals the need for more heat which then builds up in the office. Energy is thus wasted.



## COMMUNITY LIBRARY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The electrical switchboard is reported to have limited space for any future electrical expansion, so enhancing our electronic resources to any great degree, or installing any other electrical equipment is not feasible. This condition helps to save energy but leads to reduced public service.



There are only two vertical, louvered windows in the reference room. A plexi-glass panel was installed over part of each window to prevent people from throwing materials out the windows, and to protect small children from removing the louvers and injuring themselves. However, the panels restrict the flow of fresh air, which is particularly troublesome during warm days and when our odiferous patrons visit the Reference Department.

The building has only one elevator to serve physically disabled patrons. Unfortunately, this elevator often needs servicing as it either stops between floors or the doors refuse to close. The danger is when a disabled person has arrived upstairs, but cannot go back downstairs until the elevator is repaired. The situation is worse when people are trapped inside the elevator. The staff is trained to do a little troubleshooting, but when these methods don't work, we must call the Fire Department to get patrons out of the elevator. This would be much more than an inconvenience during an emergency evacuation. The aisles of the building are barely adequate to accommodate a wheelchair, and staff must constantly be alert to book carts blocking access to the downstairs public bathrooms. The architectural report says that according to code and ADA standards the number of public toilets available is not adequate for the number of library users. Neither does the building in general meet current California code and ADA requirements for accessibility. Interestingly, the majority of all those surveyed, including high school students, said it was either "very important" or "important" for the new library to be handicapped accessible.



As space is at a premium in the building, many quiet services are in close proximity to noisy ones. The video and CD areas tend to encourage conversation among patrons, but are located near to the "quiet room" where the fiction and magazine collections are found. Although the latter space is designated as a quiet area, students often choose to study together there, because more tables are available to them than in the Reference Department. Likewise, a separate room within the Reference Department was originally intended as a genealogy and government documents research area.

## COMMUNITY LIBRARY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

However, since this is where the few tables in the Reference Department are located, students use this room to hold group study meetings. Complaints about noise are thus frequent. A new library would place “noisy” services such as a computer center, a homework center, and multi media collections on one floor, while quieter pursuits such as reading and independent studying would be located on the second floor.



There is little flexibility and zero expandability left in the existing building. About 5,500 items are stored in the “attic” or storage part of the building which is inaccessible to the public. The state documents collection has been moved to this area too in order to make room for a growing genealogy collection. The storage room also holds past issues of magazines, school yearbooks, and several reference sources which used to be shelved in the public area. Pages retrieve requested material, but the public has lost the ability to browse through that part of the collection. Our special collections such as the travel center, computer books, and small business section are now flowing into one another as space has dwindled. We have rearranged bookcases and furniture on both floors over the years in order to create new special collections and expand other ones in an effort to meet the changing interests of our patrons. These collections used to stand out from the main non fiction collection so patrons could easily find items of interest to them

without struggling with the catalog or waiting at the reference desk for help. Now, whatever we do just looks crowded rather than new and appealing. The necessity to install cabling for computers in both the Children’s and Reference Departments has further limited our flexibility to improve the efficiency of the library, since any movement of workstations requires moving cables as well.



Functional spatial relationships were adversely affected by the construction of the new wings. A parking lot was built on the east side of the library during one project so another entrance was constructed. This has effectively become the principal entrance to the library rather than the original entrance on Broadway. The circulation desk faces patrons as they enter from the Broadway side of the building allowing them to quickly check in materials, renew items, apply for cards, and pay fines. But since patrons now mainly use the



## COMMUNITY LIBRARY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

McClelland Street entrance, they must wend their way around a hallway, go through security gates, and walk around to the opposite side of the circulation desk to renew their materials. Meanwhile, the service point for issuing library cards and collecting fines is located in a reverse traffic flow from the checkout desk where patrons are informed of their outstanding fines. The children's room is located in its own wing which is good for noise control, but the entrance to it spills out into the checkout line. This situation often creates havoc after a story time when many children are trying to leave at the same time.

Lack of space dictates that the young adult collection be in the same room as the children's collection. In fact, teens must traverse the children's section in order to reach the young adult section at the back of the room. Teenagers are often loath to share space with



younger patrons so an opportunity to encourage leisure reading for this age group is lost. All non children's reference services are located upstairs. However, the fiction, classics, and current magazine and newspaper collections are located downstairs. There is no one to help patrons using these collections unless they go upstairs. There are three OPAC catalogs downstairs, but again, no staff are available to assist users with these terminals.

We have no ability to separate Internet use into functions. People using email and chat share terminals with those who want to use the Internet for consumer, health, and other information as well as those who use the Internet to help with homework. Four of the seven available word processors are also Internet terminals so people needing to use those for word processing seldom have access to them.

The current site for the library is a good one. It is situated next to City Hall and across the street from the Fire and Police Departments. The shopping mall is located across another street, and a new Recreation and Parks youth facility has opened less than a block away. The library's current location receives foot traffic from the mall and is across the street from the hub for all the bus lines in the city, which gives additional customers easy access to the library. Santa Maria High School is just a few blocks away as are a



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public and private elementary school. For these reasons, the new library will be located within a few yards of the existing one. The old building will then serve as offices for those city divisions which are now scattered in other parts of the city. The new library will then remain an anchor of the Civic Center, helping to revitalize downtown, and assisting in the City's overall plan to develop a "One Stop Civic Center".

# COMMUNITY LIBRARY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

## SPACE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

This section is fully discussed in the Building Program Chapter 5 pages 3 to 10. Regarding subsection a. Library Collections #2, the statistical justification for the proposed collection sizes come from circulation statistics generated by our former circulation system (Dynix) and by our new system (Innovative Interfaces). Below is a sample of one breakdown of these statistics showing the percent increase and decrease of circulation in collections from one month to the same month the previous year.

Percent Change in Circulation from Previous Year  
for Selected Collections

CATEGORY	JAN 01	FEB 01	MAR 01	APR 01	MAY 01
Spanish Fiction	48.9%	-19.5%	-4.2%	73.4%	29.7%
Spanish Juvi Videocassette	-6.5%	-7.2%	4.9%	30.7%	9.9%
Spanish Paperback	50.3%	-4.6%	27.9%	82.1%	66.2%
Adult English Fiction	1.3%	6.1%	5%	1.6%	7.3%
Adult English Non-Fiction	-7.4%	-13.2%	-1.5%	2.7%	-9.2%
Juvi English Fiction	-12.5%	8.6%	22%	8%	23.2%
Juvi Videocassette	15%	18%	14.9%	35.5%	21.6%
Periodicals	2.7%	-7.1%	.4%	-10.9%	-16.8%

These numbers are fairly representative of circulation trends in the last several years. While circulation for Spanish language materials, Children's materials, and audio visual materials is generally increasing, that for English non-fiction is decreasing. Purchasing for non-fiction will continue in order to fulfill our role as a Main Library, but some money will be shifted toward Spanish books, children's materials, and audio visual collections as demographic figures and usage statistics indicate we should do. The demand for periodicals is also decreasing, mainly as a result of our subscriptions to full text periodical databases. We therefore anticipate less need for backfiles of periodicals in the new library.